



Volume 65 | Issue 1

Article 54

8-12-2022

Holmes' "What is Anglicanism?" (book review)

Rachel Maxson
John Brown University

The Christian Librarian is the official publication of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL). To learn more about ACL and its products and services please visit [//www.acl.org/](http://www.acl.org/)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl>

 Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Maxson, Rachel (2022) "Holmes' "What is Anglicanism?" (book review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 65: Iss. 1, Article 54.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.2374>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *The Christian Librarian* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.

Book Review



Holmes, U.T. (1982). *What is Anglicanism?* Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing. 95 pp. \$14.95. ISBN 9780819212955

The Very Rev. Urban Tigner Holmes, III, dean of the School of Theology of the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee from 1973 to 1981, wrote this book to fill a perceived dearth of material to acquaint lay audiences with the Anglican heritage of the Episcopal Church. Each of the 12 chapters introduces a significant figure from Anglican/Episcopalian history and uses that person's life and legacy as a hook for explicating a theme of Anglican identity (e.g., the Bible, the Liturgy, Mission, etc.). The book's overarching characterization of the "Anglican consciousness" emphasizes the poetic and analogical sensibilities the author sees as giving the Anglican/Episcopalian tradition a greater tolerance for ambiguity than is seen in many other religious traditions.

Having never been revised following the author's untimely death shortly after completing the manuscript in 1981, much less updated in response to theological and social developments in the intervening decades, the volume captures in amber the ecclesial concerns of the late 1970s. The selection of relatively unknown individuals for most of the exemplars of the faith featured in each chapter is one of the strengths of the book, yet Holmes' attempt to display the "infinite variety" (p. 89) of people in the Anglican communion is undermined by the choice of white male clerics from England or the United States for almost all of the profiles (three women and one Ugandan prelate are notable exceptions).

Citations, except of the author's other books, are mostly missing, and when they do appear are so incomplete as to be misleading. Although extensive documentation is not to be expected in a non-academic book like this one, some recommendations for further reading would have been valuable, especially in a book that gives such cursory treatment of such an expansive subject matter. Historical figures have birth and death dates parenthetically after first mention of the name, which is a helpful clue for tracking the chronology of the heritage presented, as no effort is made to sketch even a broad timeline of the tradition.

Libraries with a completist philosophy for documenting the self-perception of 20th century American Protestantism will wish to retain this title as a snapshot of the Episcopal Church from 40 years ago. For providing contemporary readers with

an introduction to Anglican heritage, the gap in the literature Holmes observed in 1980 has since been amply filled by more up-to-date options, including *Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford UP, 2006) and *Our Anglican Heritage* (Cascade Books, 2010).

Reviewer

Rachel Maxson, John Brown University